DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 631 JC 940 331

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TITLE	School-to-Work Transition Is Now Law. AACC Letter, Special Issue #1.
INSTITUTION	American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jun 94
NOTE	6p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Educational Legislation; *Education Work Relationship; *Federal Legislation; *Labor Legislation; *Newsletters; *Organizations (Groups); Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*School To Work Legislation

ABSTRACT

This special edition of the "AACC Letter" is part of a continuing effort by the AACC to keep community colleges current with developments related to the School-To-Work (STW) Transition legislation, which President Clinton signed into law on May 4, 1994. The newsletter begins with a summary of the AACC's efforts to influence bill language that would be favorable to community college participation in STW, a list of upcoming STW-related AACC professional development activities, and a statement encouraging state directors for community college education to become involved in the development of STW partnerships in their states. Next, a summary is provided of the School-To-Work Opportunities Act, which seeks to end the fragmentation of programs that are designed to help young people learn the skills to prepare them for high-skill, high-wage jobs. The act provides $300 million dollars in federal assistance to states to develop and implement a STW transition system. The next sections provide an update on the present and future status of the STW implementation grant process, including information on the: (1) purposes for which states may apply for joint Education and Labor Department planning grants; (2) necessary components of one-time state implementation grant proposals; (3) local implementation grants, including the uses which may be made by local partnerships of grant funding; (4) provisions in the law which allow states to request a waiver from several federal statutory or regulatory provisions; (5) combining funds for low income schools to maximize the effective use of all potential resources; and (6) the three different STW funding streams dedicated to state efforts, local partnership grants, and high poverty grants. (KP)

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AACC Letter, Special Issue #1

American Association of Community Colleges

June 1994

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SPECIAL ISSUE #1

AACC LETTER

June 1994 American Association of Community Colleges

From the desk of Dave Pierce

SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION IS NOW LAW

This Special Edition of the *AACC Letter* is part of the continuing effort of AACC to keep member colleges current with developments regarding School-To-Work (STW) Transition legislation. President Clinton signed into law the STW legislation on May 4, 1994. We wanted to take this opportunity to outline this new law, which we consider to be "user friendly" for community colleges. Also, we wanted to update you on the present and future status of the associated implementation grant process. In this section, you will note that the Request For Proposal (RFP) process is at an advanced stage. This circumstance reflects the fact that the Administration chose to implement the spirit of STW through existing legislation and appropriation authority in order to jump-start the entire process.

AACC worked diligently and successfully to create bill language that was favorable to community college participation in STW. Simultaneously, the Association provided timely updates to the membership on events and critical timetables with respect to the above mentioned early implementation strategy of STW. Now we have a law -- as well as an implementation strategy -- that is on a fast track. The process is ongoing, with many present and future opportunities for community college participation at various levels. The Administration has made it clear on many occasions that the early implementation strategy should not be interpreted as a strategy to get as much money out to as many states as possible. Rather, the Administration indicates that it is concerned with quality in this first round of grants. Community college participation is considered part of the quality. Therefore, there remains plenty of time for community college action at the state and local level.

Special STW Teleconference, Seminars Planned

To assist colleges in developing an even greater understanding of STW, administrators are encouraged to participate in several professional development activities AACC is launching. These events will educate college staff about all aspects of the STW program and the steps that must be taken to ensure involvement in this important national effort.

At the end of September, AACC will cosponsor a teleconference with the National Alliance of Business on the School-To-Work law. National policymakers and partners active in STW programs are being invited to participate and share their insights as part of the event. Although the date has not been finalized, it will be broadcast either on the evening of Sept. 20 or 27. More information will be provided in future editions of the *AACC Letter*.

AACC also will conduct three one-day workshops on STW: in Chicago, Oct. 19; in Denver, Oct. 24; and in Atlanta, Nov. 18. Michael Brustein, a leading national expert on STW, and Marty Mahler, Tech Prep Coordinator for Iowa, will be principal speakers for the workshops. In addition to receiving a users guide to STW, the workshops will focus on the coordination of the Act with key pieces of the education/ training matrix, including the Carl D. Perkins and Applied Technology Act and the Job Training Partnership Act.

Complete information on the events will be mailed to CEOs in July.

Are Community Colleges Involved in the Planning Process?

AACC has learned that State Directors in several states have not been involved in the development of School-To-Work partnerships in their states. Since this initiative must include a postsecondary component, it is critical that community colleges be involved in the planning process. AACC would appreciate feedback from State Directors about the level of their involvement in the state and local planning processes. Please forward these comments to Dave Buonora, legislative associate, at AACC.

Summary of the School-To-Work Opportunities Act

The School-To-Work Opportunities Act seeks to end the fragmentation of programs that are designed to help young people learn the skills to prepare them for high-skill, high-wage jobs. The STW Act is intended to create a system, not a new program, to consolidate and streamline some of the existing education and job-related training programs that are duplicative or ineffective. Community colleges should be integral members of the local partnerships established through the law and, as a result, will play an important role in the law's implementation.

The STW Act provides federal assistance to states to

develop and implement a School-To-Work transition system. The goal of this system is to ensure for students a smooth transition from secondary education to postsecondary education and into meaningful, high-quality employment. Under this initiative, significant partnerships must be developed at the state, regional, and local levels. These partnerships will bring together educators, business, industry, labor, and community-based organizations to integrate academic and vocational-technical education and to more closely align secondary and postsecondary curricula.

A critical component of the law is the creation of partnerships between education and employers. It seeks to include employers as full partners in providing high-quality, worksite-based learning opportunities for students. By combining academic and occupational learning, the program will improve the knowledge and skills of the neglected majority of students that do not pursue baccalaureate degrees.

The STW law gives partnerships the flexibility and autonomy to design and implement their own programs based on regional economic and labor market needs. While the STW Act does require that programs include a few core components and goals, it does not mandate the means to achieve these goals. The three main program components are: work-based learning; school-based learning; and connecting activities that will combine all elements of the program.

The work-based learning component is to consist of a coherent sequence of job training and work experiences that are coordinated with the activities in the school-based learning component. In addition, workplace mentoring and instruction in general workplace competencies such as positive work attitudes, employability skills and participative skills are also included. The work-based component may further include job shadowing, school-sponsored enterprises and on-the-job training for academic credit.

The school-based component is comprised of the following elements: career exploration and counseling; an initial selection of a career major; a sequential program of study with high academic standards, which prepares students for postsecondary education and attainment of a skills certificate; a program of instruction and curriculum that integrates academic and vocational learning; and ongoing evaluations to assess progress in the achievement of core academic and vocational skills.

The connecting activities component would include activities such as: matching students with employers' work-based opportunities; making communication linkages among students, parents, teachers, school administrators and employers; providing technical assistance and services to employers and others in designing the work-based and school-based components of the program; and providing assistance to schools and employers to integrate school-based and work-based learning as well as the integration of academic and occupational learning.

State Planning Grants

States may apply for joint Education and Labor Department grants to plan and develop their statewide School-To-Work systems. These grants are limited to $1 million in any fiscal year. Uses for this money may include:

- Identifying or establishing state structures to administer the program;
- Identifying existing School-To-Work programs that could be merged into the new system;
- Establishing broad-based partnerships among employers, labor, education, government, and other community based organizations;
- Developing a marketing plan to build support for programs;
- Supporting local planning and development activities to provide guidance and technical assistance for teachers, employers, mentors, counselors, administrators, and others in the development of School-To-Work programs;
- Designing challenging curricula.

State Implementation Grants

States may apply for a one-time grant of up to five years to implement their School-To-Work systems. In their applications, states must describe how they would allocate funds to local partnerships and include any requests for the waiver of federal laws. In addition, the development of the application must include collaboration between the governor, state educational agency, state agencies responsible for economic development, job training, postsecondary education, vocational education and rehabilitation, the individual assigned for the state under the Perkins Act, and other appropriate officials.

Local Implementation Grants

Local partnerships are eligible for grants from either the state or the federal government. Any local partnership that wants to receive a grant from a state that has received a state implementation grant must make an application to the state. The application must describe how the proposed program would include work-based and school-based learning components and connecting activities. The application must also provide measurable program goals and outcomes, an area-wide description of strategies, timetables for serving all students, and a description of plans for paid work experiences.

The process for involving employers and other groups in the development and implementation of the School-To-Work opportunities program must be explained.

If awarded a grant, a local partnership may use the funds to:

- Recruit and assist employers to provide work-based learning experiences;
- Establish consortia of employers to provide access to jobs related to the career majors of students;
- Establish a committee made up of the members of the local partnership to develop and sustain connecting activities;
- Develop curricula that integrates academic and occupational learning, school-based and work-based learning and secondary and post-secondary education for all students in the area;
- Provide staff development for work-based and school-based staff on new curriculum, assessments, student guidance and student performance;
- Develop a program to assist at-risk students, low-achieving students and students with disabilities to graduate from high school, receive further education and/or make the transition to work;
- Collect labor market and wage data as well as generic and specific skill needs of employers to assist in the identification of career majors;
- Integrate work-based and school-based learning into existing job training programs for drop outs;
- Establish or expand school-to-apprenticeship programs;
- Provide staff development to assist workplace mentors in developing work-based learning components;
- Design local strategies to provide adequate planning time and staff development activities for teachers, counselors and school site mentors;
- Enhance linkages between after-school, weekend and summer jobs and opportunities for career exploration and school-based learning;
- Provide career exploration and awareness, counseling and college awareness to prepare students for the transition from school to work.

The School-To-Work Opportunities Act also authorizes the Education and Labor Secretaries to award competitive grants directly to local partnerships in states that have not received or have only recently received implementation grants. However, any partnership that intends to compete for funds under this title must submit an application to the state for review and comment before submitting an application to the Secretaries. All applications received will be subject to a peer review process. No grants will be made to local partnerships unless the Secretaries determine after consultation with the state that the local plan is in accordance with the appropriate state plan, if such exists.

The Secretaries are also authorized to award competitive grant to partnerships in high poverty areas. Any application submitted for these high poverty area grants must also be reviewed by the state before submission to the Secretaries.

Waiver Provisions

The School-To-Work Opportunities Act provides the opportunity for states to request a waiver from several federal statutory or regulatory provisions. The Secretaries of Education or Labor may exercise waiver authority for any federal requirement or provision if the state or local partnership can show clear evidence that this requirement impedes its ability to carry out the purposes of the STW Act. States and local partnerships may submit a waiver request to either one or both Secretaries during the development or implementation phase of a STW program. The waiver should be submitted with a state's plan or as an amendment to the plan.

Local partnerships seeking a waiver must first submit the waiver application to the state, and the state in turn submits the application to the appropriate Secretary. Before a waiver is submitted by a state, each local partnership and local educational agency participating in a school-to-work program must be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver. Any comments obtained from the local partnerships and local education agencies must be included with the application for waiver.

The Secretaries cannot grant waivers if the waiver would: alter the basic purposes or goals of the affected programs; affect maintenance of effort; change comparability of services; prevent equitable participation of students attending private schools; inhibit student and parental participation; interrupt the distribution of funds to state or local education agencies; alter the eligibility of individual participants in affected programs; or affect public health or safety, labor, civil rights, occupational safety and health or environmental protection requirements or prohibit construction.

Combining Funds for Low Income Schools

The STW law allows local partnerships to combine Federal funds in order to maximize the effective use of all potential resources. If a local partnership elects to combine funds, it is subject to the same limitations that apply to waivers as listed above. Furthermore, the partnership must include in its application for funding, a description of the funds that will

be combined, the activities to be carried out with the combined funds, and specific outcomes expected of participants in schoolwide School-To-Work activities. Any partnership that combines funds must also provide information on the proposed combination of Federal funds to parents, students, educators, advocacy and civil rights organizations and the public.

Federal Funding

The School-To-Work Opportunities Act authorizes $300 million dollars to establish STW programs for Fiscal Year (FY) 1995, and such sums as necessary for FYs 1996 through 1999. It is important to note that these totals are merely authorizations for spending. Actually spending will be appropriated annually by Congress.

School-To-Work Transition Implementation

One of the interesting aspects of the STW program is its dual administration by the US Departments of Education and Labor. Both Departments have been given an equal share of the implementation dollars, and the two Departments are sharing in the staffing of a stand-alone operations office in Washington, D.C. Funding streams follow three different programmatic avenues. The primary funding stream is dedicated to state efforts. All states received planning grant funding in order to plan and write their state implementation grant applications. Round one for the awarding of state implementation grants is well along in the selection process. Ten states were selected for site visits with the intention of selecting four to eight of those states for implementation grants by the end of June.

From the standpoint of community college involvement in the state application effort, colleges need to be aware that the legislation specifically requires connecting activities with higher education, and that higher education is defined by law to include community colleges. Therefore, there is strong reason to believe that the Departments will reject state applications that project a weak or nonexistent higher education linkage. Community colleges need to work to define the desired role. They can ensure that transfer into their programs is viable or they can pursue a portion of the programmatic effort similar to what might be found in some college-based co-op programs.

The second funding stream is for specific local partnership grants. These grant opportunities were created to advance the efforts of specific communities that might be further along in STW development than their state. In these cases, local sites may apply for a local grant, but their grant application must generally conform to the direction of the state grant. Local site application approval is not dependent upon the disposition of the state grant. Thus, local sites may win approval even when their state wins approval. Such a circumstance would be justified on the grounds that the local site could be so advanced as to be considered a model even within a well positioned state. The first round of the local site grants resulted in 260 applications of which 80 have been selected for a second review. Government evaluators hope to choose 15-25 sites by the end of June or early in July.

The final funding stream is that for high poverty grants. These grants are in the final stages of Departmental review. The govenment anticipates a "Request For Proposal" sometime in June or early July with a deadline sometime in the Fall.

The government expects to begin a whole new cycle of competitions in all categories by next fall. Therefore, colleges should continue the process of positioning themselves for involvement in STW.